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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BAGHDAD 000918

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TAGS: [PREF](#) [KPAL](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [KCRS](#) [IZ](#) [PA](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: 89 BAGHDAD PALESTINIANS FLEE TO JORDAN BORDER

REF: A. A) 06 BAGHDAD 00785

[1](#)B. B) 05 BAGHDAD 04232

[1](#)C. C) 05 BAGHDAD 04657

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires David M. Satterfield for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. According to representatives from the Palestinian Human Rights Organization, 89 Palestinians, including 42 children, left Baghdad by bus March 18 for the Jordanian border hoping to gain entry to Jordan. They were accompanied by two Christian Peacekeeping Team (CPT) members whose group claims that the Palestinians orchestrated the move themselves. The Palestinians did not obtain entry and remain at the frontier, held up in a no man's land between the Iraqi and Jordanian borders. Palestinian Human Rights president Muhammed Abid Mutlak Mowsiq told us March 19 that additional Palestinian families are awaiting the outcome of this pilot flight before determining whether they will leave Baghdad themselves. The 89 Palestinians passed through the Iraqi border with expired Iraqi travel documents, making a re-entry into Iraq extremely difficult. Although the Palestinians indicated March 20 their determination not to return to Iraq, we are urging GOI officials to allow re-entry into Iraq should they alter their decision. The Palestinians indicate that for the time-being they have a short-term supply of food and water, but limited shelter. This flight is a result of longstanding security concerns within the Baghdad Palestinian community, heightened recently by a series of grisly attacks against seven Palestinians. End Summary.

PALESTINIANS FEARFUL OF FURTHER TARGETINGS

[1](#)2. (C) Palestinian Human Rights president Muhammed Abid Mutlak Mowsiq told PolFSN March 18 that multiple violent attacks against Palestinians between March 10 and 17 had reinforced the desire by many in the Palestinian community (largely living in one expanded compound area in Baghdad's Baladiat neighborhood) to leave Iraq. Although unable to provide details, he claimed that at least seven individuals were targeted simply because they were Palestinian. He further explained that many were easy-to-target store owners.

[1](#)3. (C) Christian Peacekeeping Team (CPT) representative Anita Davis told PolOff March 18 that her organization had tracked these and other Palestinian-related attacks closely. She also said that seven Palestinians had been found dead over the previous week. In one case, she said, the head of one victim was severed and thrown into the Baladiat compound. In a separate case, the corpse of a Palestinian arrested in Baghdad allegedly by Iraqi security forces in January was found in a Najaf morgue. Because of these grisly incidents

and the attacks following the Samarra bombing February 22, Davis said, the Palestinians' sense of security had been shaken even further.

PALESTINIANS WANT TO LEAVE; JORDAN WILL NOT ALLOW ENTRY

14. (C) In a March 18 phone conversation, Palestinian Human Rights Association Mowsiq told PolFSN that 89 Palestinians had left Baghdad for the Jordanian border. He underlined that the Palestinians themselves had arranged for the trip, but had requested assistance from several organizations before receiving a commitment from CPT to accompany the group. CPT representative Anita Davis told PolOff March 18 and 19 that 2 CPT members had accompanied the 89 Palestinians, but that the 89 were not allowed entry into Jordan.

15. (C) According to Embassy Amman, GOJ refused entry to the Palestinians and indicated that they would stand firm on this position. Embassy Amman has also indicated that GOJ was displeased with the lack of coordination as well as with GOI for allowing these Palestinians through. GOJ is reportedly allowing UNHCR to assess the encampment and possibly provide assistance to the 89 individuals.

16. (C) Mowsiq asserted March 19 to PolFSN that additional Palestinian families were awaiting the outcome of the 89 individuals' plight before determining whether they themselves would leave Baghdad. He could not give an estimate of the numbers of those ready to leave immediately.

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PALESTINIANS SAY THEY WILL NOT GO BACK TO IRAQ

17. (C) In a March 20 telcon, one of the 89 Palestinians, named Ehab (LNU), told PolFSN that the group was adamant that they would not return to Iraq. All of the fleeing families, he said, had received direct threats or been victims of violence. They were, therefore, unwilling to return to Iraq. He further noted that the travel documents of all the group, except three women with Jordanian passports, had expired. He asserted that, when the group crossed the Iraqi border, the border control officials indicated that they would let the group through, but the Iraqi authorities would not be able to allow the group to return because of the expired status of the documents.

18. (C) Ehab indicated that the group had enough food and water for several days as well as blankets -- but lacked adequate shelter. He mentioned that there were no immediate health issues among the member of the group. He also stated that the buses that had driven the group to the border had already departed to Baghdad.

IRAQI INTERIOR MINISTRY: NEWS TO US

19. (C) Mission officers have spoken to MoI directors on March 20 about this group and urged that the Palestinians be allowed back into Iraq. The MoI officials were unaware of the refugees' flight and indicated that they had to get clarification. Mission is also in touch with U.S. Marine elements in Anbar who are tracking this as well and has alerted the Red Crescent, who are looking into providing assistance.

COMMENT AND PROPOSED ACTION

¶10. (C) Although both CPT and the Palestinian Human Rights Organization claim that this movement was orchestrated solely by the Palestinians, we are wary of CPT's role. This situation mirrors a similar CPT/Palestinian coordinated effort to get to the borders of Syria(ref B). We do not yet have a sense of the numbers of a possible mass exodus; Palestinian Human Rights Organization president Mowsiq has indicated the numbers could range anywhere from the hundreds to the thousands. It would be hard, in any case, to move hundreds or thousands quickly given the precarious security situation in Baghdad and Anbar. We believe, and this has been confirmed by Mowsiq, that if the 89 gain entry, many others in Baghdad will follow. Post will urge the Palestinian community here not to panic and create a crisis on the Iraqi-Jordanian border. We will request that ISF aid in the protection of the Palestinian community.

¶11. (C) PROPOSED ACTION: Post proposes that Consulate Jerusalem urge the Palestinian Authority representatives to use its good offices to stop further transport of Palestinians to the border. Post further proposes that Embassy Amman facilitate access of UNHCR personnel in efforts to assist the Palestinians.
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